

PERSONAL ERGONOMICS

SAFETY TOOL BOX TALK

WHAT IS ERGONOMICS?

Ergonomics is the science of matching tools and tasks to the work environment. In other words, ergonomics tries to make your job fit *you*, rather than making *you* fit your *job*.

The purpose of ergonomics is to reduce or eliminate injuries and illnesses that can result from stress on muscles, nerves, and joints. Physical problems from cumulative trauma. These usually involve pain and damage to muscles, tendons, and nerves in the back, neck, shoulders, wrists, hands, and elbows. Discomfort can be mild and periodic, or long lasting. Typical ailments include: Tendonitis, "Tennis Elbow," Trigger Finger, lower back pain, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome which causes hands and wrists to tingle or become numb, and Reynauds Syndrome which causes fingers to become white.

Disorders can be caused by making the same motion over and over, staying in one position too long, or working in awkward positions. They also result from working with tools that don't fit the body, using a great deal of physical force, and exposure to long periods of heavy vibration.

HOW TO AVOID DISCOMFORT

Ergonomically related disorders occur to all types of workers, from laborers to office personnel.

- Use two hands instead of one for a task --to reduce excess demand on a single muscle group.
- Use tools that are right for the job and proportioned for your body.
- Use power tools instead of manual tools when possible.
- Take frequent breaks from repetitive motion tasks.
- Avoid repeating awkward movements or holding yourself in awkward positions.
- Wear protective gloves that reduce pressure or tool vibration on your fingers.
- For computer use--keep the screen 12 to 18 inches from your face and just below eye level.
- Position the keyboard so that your wrists are straight and your elbows are close to your body.
- Change positions, stretch often to improve blood circulation, and take breaks regularly.

